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Multiple 1964-68 Peace Efforts and Their Code Names

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The Seaborn "Initiative"

Between June, 1964, and June, 1965, J. Blair Seaborn, the Canadian member of the International Control Commission in Southeast Asia, met five times with North Vietnamese officials. He carried, according to the official diplomatic history of the period, "unusually substantive and dramatic" messages.

"... The main subject stressed repeatedly by each (side) was its determination to do and endure whatever might be necessary to see the war to a conclusion satisfactory to it.

"To the extent they believed each other, the two sides were amply forewarned that a painful contest lay ahead. Even so, they were not inclined to compromise their way out."

Accordingly, nothing came of the Seaborn missions.

Project Mayflower

In May, 1965, President Johnson ordered a pause in the bombing of North Vietnam in an effort to persuade the North Vietnamese to take some reciprocal action toward de-escalation. U.S. Ambassador Roy Kohler in Moscow was instructed to inform the North Vietnamese Ambassador there that the halt would be indefinite and could lead to "a permanent end to ... attacks on North Vietnam."

The Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) refused to transmit the message to Hanoi and suggested it be turned over to the Soviet government. The Soviets refused to act as intermediaries and "lectured Kohler at length upon the U.S. misconception of the conflict in Vietnam."

The failure of this initiative had been anticipated by the CIA and other Administration officials but was regarded within the government as a productive gesture toward world and domestic opinion even if it failed.

The XYZ Channel

Mai Van Bo, head of the DRV delegation in Paris, had three contacts with the U.S. government between May, 1965, and February, 1966.

The first contact was through the French government on May 19, 1965. The French notified the U.S. that Bo believed that "favorable condi-

tions for (a) solution" could be created if the U.S. would accept the "Four Points" of North Vietnam's announced position.

There was no reply from the Americans until August, 1965, when Edmund Gullion, a retired foreign service officer who is now at Tufts University, was sent to Paris to talk with Mai Van Bo. They met four times and their discussions, the diplomatic history says, represented "the most serious mutual effort to resolve matters of substance between the U.S. and DRV before and since."

Gullion (known as "X") and Bo ("R") discussed the possibility for reconvening the 1954 Geneva Conference on Southeast Asia and seemed to be heading toward agreements on some of the Hanoi "Four Points." Then suddenly Bo failed to show up for a scheduled meeting (Sept. 7, 1965) and the initiative ended. The diplomatic section of the Pentagon papers called the episode "as mysterious in its ending as it was fruitful and suggestive in its beginnings."

Pinta: the Rangoon Contact

On Dec. 24, 1965, the U.S. began a 37-day bombing pause. It came after Soviet Embassy Counsellor Zinchuk in Washington told White House aide McGeorge Bundy that Hanoi was unlikely to respond, although a pause might possibly improve the atmosphere for the long run.

During the pause, the U.S. met with the North Vietnamese counsel general in Rangoon, Burma, and submitted an aide memoire. No reply came until 12 hours after the bombing was resumed. It amounted to a rebuttal of the U.S. position.

The Ronning Missions

Retired Canadian diplomat Chester Ronning visited Hanoi in March and June of 1966. Ronning had friendly relations with the Chinese and was known to be critical of U.S. policies toward China and Vietnam, but the U.S. nevertheless gave its formal support.

During his first visit Ronning was unable to sway North Vietnamese leaders from their insistence on the previously announced "Four Points" as the only basis for settling the

if the U.S. would cease bombing and all other acts of war against North Vietnam.

Neither the U.S. nor North Vietnam was enthusiastic about a return trip but Ronning did arrange to visit Hanoi again in June. He was not permitted to see Pham Van Dong this time, and was told by a lesser official that there would be no military reciprocity for a U.S. bombing halt.

Marigold: The Polish Channel

Marigold was the code name for negotiating efforts that involved Janusz Lewandowski, the Polish member of the International Control Commission in Vietnam. These efforts began in June 1966 in Saigon and also involved the Italian Ambassador there.

Lewandowski made several visits to Hanoi in succeeding months, carrying with him a 10-point formulation of his own interpretation of the American attitude toward a settlement.

North Vietnam agreed to meet a U.S. representative in Warsaw, but canceled all further discussion of the matter after U.S. bombing raids on Hanoi.

The Pentagon history concluded that Marigold gave each side a glimpse of possible areas of negotiation. It added that the Poles "acted as friends of Hanoi, not neutrals" and "applied pressure in good faith by the ever-present threat of disclosing their version of the matter to influential world leaders or the public at large." Nothing came of the Marigold exercise and it did leak out to the world.

Packers: The Romanian Channel

From October 1966 through February 1968 the Romanians made efforts to take a part in the negotiating picture. Acting on the suggestion of Ambassador Averell Harriman, Deputy Foreign Minister Gheorghe Macovescu went to Hanoi in December, 1967, and came to Washington early in January, 1968, to convey North Vietnam's position. In an effort to seek clarification, he returned to Hanoi in the third week of January — just before the Communist launched the Tet Offensive. His report reached Washington after Tet.

historian of the Pentagon papers, the Romanians were "very poor reporters; they did not pick up dis-

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